
New shared lab spells opportunity for small biotech start-ups

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Small biotech start-ups in northern New Mexico not only gained a new home when the Santa Fe Business Incubator's 700-square-foot BioScience Lab officially opened on April 15 but a way to save crucial funds by sharing lab space and equipment. Participating companies also gain something else: a collaborative research and business environment in which ideas can be easily shared and discussed.

The BioScience Lab was made possible through a \$1.25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration, supplemented by additional monies from the City of Santa Fe and Los Alamos National Laboratory.

"Los Alamos takes its responsibility to support and encourage private innovation very seriously," explained David Pesiri, director of the Richard P. Feynman Center for Innovation, Los Alamos' technology transfer organization.

So far, about 140 businesses have used the Santa Fe Business Incubator to launch commercial enterprises. The companies have created 1,000 new jobs, according to incubator president and CEO Marie Longserre.

Successful example

John Elling is a prime example of biotech companies' potential for success. After working for Los Alamos National Laboratory from 1991 to 1998, Elling started a private biotech business in 1998 and then briefly returned to Los Alamos as a consulting visiting entrepreneur in 2005. It was during his second stay that Elling came across a Laboratory invention—technology to study and count cells with the help of sound waves—which the Laboratory subsequently helped commercialize.

With commercial licensing agreements from Los Alamos in place, John Elling and the sound wave project's lead scientists, Greg Kaduchek and Mike Ward, formed a private company in 2006 and subsequently sold the business to biotech giant Invitrogen in 2008. The fledgling company was headquartered in the original wing of the Santa Fe Business Incubator.

But the story does not end there. Fast-forwarding to this year, Elling, who is in the process of launching another company at the Santa Fe Business Incubator, learned that the last piece of equipment ordered for the incubator's BioScience Lab was none other than the Attune® Acoustic Focusing Cytometer (cell-counting instrument) developed from Kaduchek and Ward's sound wave technology. Coming full circle, Los Alamos National Laboratory helped fund the BioScience Lab's new \$50,000 cytometer with a \$10,000 gift.

"I'm delighted to say that I had nothing to do with the purchase," Elling said. "The instrument was chosen based on its merits, without my foreknowledge, but the technology behind it had its roots in New Mexico."

To learn more about biotech start-ups in Santa Fe, watch the [Santa Fe Scene: Biotech 101](#) video on YouTube, which includes comments by John Elling. To hear local companies discuss the [Santa Fe Business Incubator](#), visit the incubator's [video](#) webpage.

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